

REFLECTIONS
ON
Dr. Stillingfleet's
BOOK of the
UNREASONABLENESS
OF
SEPARATION.

By a Conformist Minister in the Country: in
order to Peace.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Nathaniel Ranew* at the *Kings Arms* in
St. Pauls Church-Yard. 1681.

REFLECTIONS

ON

THE STATE OF

THE NATION

IN 1790

BY

JOHN ADAMS

OF THE MASSACHUSETTS

IN TWO VOLUMES

LONDON: Printed by J. DODD, in Pall-mall.

21. 1790.

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SIR.

According to your desire I have read the late Book of the Learned Dean of St. Pauls, and upon my reading of it, I observe that he hath not treated his Adversaries (at least some of them) with that temper, candor and gravity, as might have been expected from so worthy a man. He complains of them in his Preface and in sundry places of his book he impeaches them of passion, scurrility, spight, and some other things of like signification; but in my Apprehension he hath paid off all Scores, and given them something by way of Surplusage; if they have lashed him with rods, he hath chastised them with Scorpions, and peradventure you may think so too, by that time you have reviewed the particulars thereof.

Pref. Page 59. After the Dr. had returned thanks to Dr. O. for the *Decency and Civility of Language* wherewithal he replied to his Sermon, he expresseth himself, thus concerning Mr. Baxter: *The next that took the field was Mr. B. who appeared with so much anger and unbecoming passion, that I truly pitied him; and was so far from being transported by it, that it was enough to cure an inclination to an indecent passion, to see how ill it became a Man of his Age, Profession and Reputation.*

It seems the unbecoming passion that did appear in Mr. B. was not enough to Cure all inclinations to it in the very worthy and excellent Dr.; for had it cured those inclinations, so many sharp passages and severe reflections upon that holy and good man had never dropt from his pen, as are to be found in his book. But why doth the Dr. pity Mr. B? hath he lost his understanding? Is he become a Child again? Or what is the matter? I can ob-

serve no decay therein by his books ; but it may be the Dr. may see that which I cannot discern ; but if Mr. B. be so contemptible an Adversary, his victory will be the more facile, though his triumph will be the less glorious.

Page the 10th. of the same Preface, the Learned Dr. after he had spoken something of the constitution, and government of this Church, and affirmed it the same that it was in the days of Cranmer, Ridley &c. Those blessed and glorious Martyrs, he subjoins, *which Government now some are so busy to destroy* (meaning Mr. Baxter) *by publishing one book after another on purpose to represent it as unlawful and inconsistent with the primitive institution : Is all this done for the honour of our Reformation ? Is this the way to preserve the Protestant Religion ? to fill mens minds with prejudices against the first settlement of it, and to make the World believe that the government of the Church then established, was repugnant to the primitive institution of Christ ? and that five Martyred Bishops exercised an unlawful authority over Diocesan Churches ? But whether will not mens indiscreet zeal, and some of their own fancies carry them, especially after Forty years Prescription ?*

These last words look something scornful and sarcastical. Mr. B. belike is a man of some zeal, but of very little understanding ; he entertained some fancies about Forty years ago concerning the unlawfulness of Diocesan Episcopacy, and believes them to this day upon prescription. But the Dr. makes no question but he shall confute this fanciful man, and *make it appear, that our present Episcopacy* (which Mr. B. opposes) *is agreeable to the institution of Christ, and the best and most flourishing Churches ; and easily he may, if Mr. B. be such a pitiful Antagonist.*

But

But what if after all this Mr. B. hath said nothing against Diocesan Episcopacy, as such, but only against the vast extent of their Diocesses! hath he not said, that he thinks the Apostles had successors in the ordinary part of their work and office? and that such have a supervising care of many Churches, and are *Episcopi Episcoporum*, having a power to admonish and instruct the Pastors, and to regulate Ordinations, and all great and common affairs of the Churches, with many other things? Nay, provided their Diocesses be no bigger than they are able to manage, he would be content that Censures were *in actu exercito*, left to the Bishops, provided they were not done against the knowledg and conscience of particular Pastors; for he hath said more than once, I think, that provided Discipline be exercised, he would never contend who should do it. If the Dr. knows not how to reconcile the honour of our Reformers and Reformation, with the retrenchment of Diocesses (which are the same now that then) he knows a Gentleman that about Twenty years since did, I dare say, very well understand it; and he may at his pleasure advise with him about it. And Bishop *Usher*, a very great man, and one greater than he, even his present Majesty, have thought the retrenchment of Diocesses, by the multiplication of Suffragan Bishops, a thing very reconcilable with the honour of the Reformation; Otherwise 'tis to be supposed they would never have declared their judgment in the favour of it: and the Learned Dr. himself grants in his book, p. 260. that *the number of Churches in Diocesses have been very different, as all men know*; and if so, they may be reduced to smaller limits with as little prejudice to the constitution of this Church, as dishonour to the Reformation.

'Tis true, Mr. B. calls these Bishops that I am discoursing of, Archbishops; but the Dr. declares, that about the word he will have no controversie with him, but permits him to use his pleasure, and enjoy his own fancy therein, p. 264.

To which let me add, that 'tis acknowledged, that Mr. B. doth indeed dispute with great earnestness against our *English* Diocesan Episcopacy; but not merely as Diocesan, but as an office specifically distinct from that which he thinks to be lawfully exercised by the successors of the Apostles; that is, the Bishops, or Archbishops, as he chuses rather to call them: The foundation of this specifick difference, Mr. B. lays in the largeness of their Diocesses. What he says for the proof thereof, the Dr. knows very well; if he be not satisfied with the Validity of his proofs, he may attacque them, and 'tis very like Mr. Baxter, that man of blind Zeal and Fancies, may chance to defend them as well as he is able.

But what means this prolix Paragraph of discourse? why this! Mr. Baxter acknowledges a Diocesan Bishop, under the title of an Archbishop, but thinks our *English* Diocesses too large, and would fain have them less. Dr. *Stillingsfleet* hath formerly thought it adviseable; and at this day confesses, that Diocesses have not been of any immutable constitution; and therefore, say I, they may be altered in this, as well as in former ages of the world; so that for ought that I can see, the Learned Dr. hath causelessly represented Mr. Baxter, as an enemy to the Constitution of this Church; and treated him something scornfully, and opprobriously for no reason in the world. But whether will not intemperate heat, and some little elation of mind, carry even pious and good men! for such do I esteem this Reverend Doctor.

In Page 37. after the Dr. had made some reflections upon Mr. B's Book entituled *A Plea for Peace*, he speaks thus, *Not long after (the publishing that Plea for Peace) the same Author sets forth another Book with this Title, The true and only way of Concord of all the Christian Churches; as though he had been Christs Plenipotentiary upon earth, and were to set the terms of Peace and War amongst all Christians; but I wish he had shewed himself such a pattern of meekness, humility, patience, and a peaceable disposition, that we might not have so much reason to dispute his Credentials.* These words are very haughty and full of contempt! but what Reason is there for them? Is Mr. B. the only man that hath propos'd his judgment and opinion for the healing the Breaches, and uniting the Churches of Christendom? Have not the great Pacificators at home and abroad done the same thing? and were they ever derided under the notion of Christs Plenipotentiaries? Cannot a person offer his judgment in this Case, but it must be entertained with scorn and derision, and he expos'd as a vapouring Mountebank? What the Dr. means by disputing Mr. B's Credentials, is not worth the while to enquire; but I perceive that if Mr. B. chance to have other apprehensions of some things than the Doctor, he shall neither be a pattern of humility, patience, meekness, or a peaceable disposition: for all the Reason why he scoffs at him, is because his way of Union and Concord is not agreeable to his apprehensions.

But the Dr. adds, *The Book is fraught with such impracticable Notions, and dividing Principles, as though his whole design had been to prove that there is no true way of Concord among Christians; for if there be no other than what he allows, all the Christian Churches in the world at this day are in a mighty mistake.*

If he be mistaken in his methods of Union and Peace, he is not the only man that hath failed therein; the main fundamental principles of that book are no other than the great Pacificators have laid down: have they not said, that the Peace and Union of Christians must be laid upon a few plain necessary things, and such as are obviously Divine? doth not Mr. B. say the same? why then are their names venerable, but Mr. B's an abhorrence? certainly there is as little of impartiality and justice in some men, as there is of humility, meekness and peaceableness in others. I will not vouch for every by passage, and hasty expression in that book; but the main principles thereof are such (in my opinion) as are fitted for the attaining as much Peace as can reasonably be expected in this world; and I am not alone in this persuasion: a perfect Union in judgment and practice is an idle expectation; men will believe variously, and practice variously too, if they have any veneration for God and their Consciences; and there is no means of preventing it wholly and totally, unless you will use the Popish artifice, *viz.* keep the common people from reading the Bible (which I believe the Dr. abhors) and prosecute all that dissent from the Constitutions of the Church, by Imprisonments, Confinements, Axes and Gibbets, which methinks is a thing so abhorrent to the nature of Christ and his Gospel, that all that call themselves his Disciples should loathe and detest it. But what! must all men believe, and do as they list? no sure, I intend no such thing, but I would distinguish between tolerable and intolerable errors; such as are tolerable must be tolerated (or this Nation will be a great Shambles, however it may be in others); those that are intolerable must be restrained by the most gentle means that are sufficient for their end; and this is the main of what

Mr.

Mr. B. designs in that Book of impracticable notions and dividing principles, and not to prove that there is *no true way of concord among Christians*; for there are some Christian Churches that do allow tolerable Dissenters from the publick established Religion, and this without any great prejudice to Concord and Peace. But the Dr. adds, *When I looked into these Books, and saw the design of them, I was mightily concerned, and infinitely surpris'd, that a person of his reputation for Piety, of his age and experience in the World, and such a lover of Peace as he had always profess'd himself, and one who tells the world so often of his dying, and of the day of judgment, should think of leaving two such firebrands behind him, as both those Books will appear to any one who duly considers them; which have been since followed with four or five more to the same purpose; so that he seems resolv'd to leave his sting and life together in the wounds of this Church: And it made me extremely pity the Case of this poor Church, when even those who pretend to plead for Peace, and to bring water to quench her flames, do but add more fuel to them.*

That a person of the Dr's reputation for piety, sobriety and gravity, should scoff Mr. B. for telling the world of his dying and the day of judgment, is something surprising to me and many others; death and judgment are serious things, and we usually think persons that speak often of them, do live under the sense, and are very much influenced by them; And are persons of this spirit and temper to be derided, and their discourses turned into ridicule? We may with as much reason scorn men for professing they fear God, and have a dread upon their minds of Hell and Damnation.

But the Two Books the Dr. had spoken of are Two Firebrands, and belike had warm'd him into an undecent heat and transport, and in that heat did a little pass be-

yond the bounds of sobriety and decorum; But what is there in those two Books that should give occasion to it? In his *Plea for Peace*, he gives an Historical account of the impositions required of all such as are permitted to Preach the Gospel in the Church of *England*, and the Reasons of his own and his brethrens dissent unto them; and this to give some satisfaction to those who reported that he and they kept up a Schism, and would give no reason for it; and he tells them how great a sin it would be in him, and those that have the same thoughts with him concerning those Impositions; and in conclusion, adds those tremendous aggravations of the sin, which the Dr. mentions Page 36. of his Preface; but in the mean time he acknowledges that the most learned, sober and judicious Conformists, as far as he can understand by their Words and Writings, submit to the required Oaths and Subscriptions, and take them in such a sense, as he himself and his brethren could take them, were they perswaded it were the true meaning of them. See his 2^d *Plea*, in the discourse what meer Non conformity is not, page the 116. so that this Book is a firebrand, and the Dr. enflamed by it, because he is not of his and some other sober and learned Conformists opinions in the exposition of the imposed Oaths, Declarations and Subscriptions: Of the other Book I have given some account already.

But there is somethng more in the forementioned Paragraph that may deserve some consideration; the Dr. will have Mr. B. resolved (or at least seem so) *to leave his life and sting together in the wounds of this Church.* These are venomous words, and not becoming this worthy person; I could hardly have believed that such words could have fallen from the Pen of Dr. St. but sure he mistook his Glas, and instead of Ink dipt it in Gall, or rather in the Poyson of Asps or Serpents. But is Mr. B. such

such an enemy to Peace? or doth he take pleasure in the wounds of this Church? Who hath said, and written, and done more to promote peace, and heal the wounds of it than he hath done? But the Dr. doth not like his method of Cure, and therefore determines, that instead of bringing water to quench the flames, he brings fuel to encrease them. The Doctors way of Cure hath been tryed these Twenty years without success; I would some tryal were made of Mr. B's, for those are the best methods of Cure that accomplish their end and intention; and tryal might be made of it, without any prejudice to the constitution of this Church, unless the present extent of Diocesses be essential unto it, which will be something hard to prove; for though it seems improbable to the Doctor, that the Government established by the Apostles, should be immediately altered, and that without any noise or din, without any opposition or contention from those whose rights were invaded by the alteration; yet 'tis not improbable that Diocesses might be enlarged to an extent too great and large; Empire being a thing very pleasant and luscious, and apt to ensnare and entangle, even good men, by its charms and attractives; especially if it be considered that in the first ages of Christianity, the number of Christians were few, and they scattered up and down among the Heathens, and whilest so, they might be capable of the Government, care and inspection of a Diocesan; but when they became more numerous by the conversion of Infidels, they might be utterly incapable of it; and so the Diocess remaining the same, as to extent of ground, might be enlarged as to number of persons, and this almost insensibly, and unperceivably, and so be a great deviation from the primitive pattern.

The Learned Doctor proceeds next to give the History of that Sermons Nativity that he Preached at the
Guild-

Guild-Hall, and which hath made such a noise in the world, and attempts to answer the Objections that were made against it. The Objections were two. First, *it was unseasonable*. Secondly, *it was too sharp and severe*. Pag. the 42d of his *Preface*, to the first he answers, *What! was it unseasonable to perswade Protestants to Peace and Unity? that surely is very seasonable at any time, and much more then; and appeals to any one that reads his Sermon, whether that were not the chief and only design of it.*

I do very heartily believe that it was his design and intention; but could the Dr. believe that the Dissenters from the present establishment (who have not been made Converts thereunto, by Laws and Executions, for the space of almost Twenty years) would all of a sudden comply against their Consciences (for that's their pretence, as he very well knows) by the force of an Harangue of an hours long at *Guild-Hall Chappel*. Surely the Doctor must think the Dissenters a company of ar-rant Juglers, Cheats and Hypocrites, or that his reason, and oratory, had an almost Omnipotent power for their conviction, or else he was strangely out in his conjectures.

The Doctor objects Pag. 42. in the name of the Dissenters, *But this advice was given to the Magistrates and Judges, and that made it look like a design to stir them up to persecution*: and answers, *There had been some colour for this, if there had been the least word tending that way through the whole Sermon*: and a few lines after he objects again, *It is enough it was Preached before the Magistrates and Judges, and therefore it must be for the persecution of Dissenters*: and then enquires, *Is it not possible for a man to speak of Peace before Hannibal, or of obedience to Governors before Julius Cæsar? To which I answer, yes doubtless it may be done, and so a man may speak of repentance before the greatest sinners; but I do not know to what pur-*

purpose, unless we intend, and desire they should make use of it. We that Preach in the Countrey, do not Preach meerly for speculation, we desire our hearers may make use of it; and I believe the Dr's Hearers (at least some of them) had those apprehensions concerning him; and what use was to be made of his Discourse (if the Dissenters be such intolerable and damnable Schismaticks as he there represents them) was easie to infer. The Dr. I know, disclaims all intent of raising persecution against them, and I do believe him; but his intention was secret, and the use that his Hearers were to make of his Sermon, was to be concluded from the nature of his Doctrine, which was apert, and open to all mens view & understanding.

The 2d Objection against the Dr's Sermon, *was, that 'twas too sharp and severe; to which he replies, but wherein doth it lye? Not in raking into old sores, or looking back to the proceedings of former times, p. 44. of his Preface. To which I shall make no other answer, than intreat him to read p. 55. of his Sermon, and peradventure he may see some reason to alter his opinion in the case; these are his words, What outcries have some made against the Church of England, as cruel and tyrannical, for expecting and requiring uniformity? And yet do not such men even at this day, contend for the obligation of a Covenant which binds men to endeavour after uniformity in Doctrine, Discipline and Worship? But they want the ingenuity of Adonibezek, to reflect on the thumbs and toes which they have cut off from others, and think themselves bound to do it again, if it were in their power.* This in my opinion is raking into old sores, and looking back to the proceedings of former times; but the Dr. is not satisfied with looking backward, but he will needs look forward too, and as if he were a searcher of hearts, undertake to tell what some men will do hereafter if it happen to come into their power; but I hope the Dr. will fail in his prognosticks; and that if it should come into their power, which I hope never will, they will never make that use of it; however I am pretty sure the
Dr.

Dr. is not infallible, and therefore I hope no man will be much affrighted with his prediction.

Having answered the two Objections (at least as he thought) that were made against his Sermon, he thus proceeds in p. 51. of his Preface; *But notwithstanding all the care I took to prevent any just occasion of offence, my Sermon had not been long abroad, but I heard of great clamours against it, which made him, as he says, p. 52. read over the Sermon again, to see what offensive passages there might be in it; and after all, I could see no just cause of offence, unless it were that I persuaded the Dissenters to submit to the Church of England, and not the Church of England to submit to them.* This is a popular argument, and the Dissenters have heard of it many a time, but have not been prevailed upon by it; and how could the Dr. think it should be of more weight now, then for many years last past? Either they must have received more light, satisfying them of the lawfulness of submission, or they must be men of less Conscience, and submit against the judgment and apprehensions of their own minds, neither of which seems probable to me, whatever it might to the Dr.

But he goes on, *And this I believe lay at the bottom of many mens Stomachs, they would have had me humoured the growing faction, which under a pretence of zeal against Popery, designed to overthrow the Church of England; or at least have Preached for alterations and abatements, and taking away Ceremonies and Subscriptions, and leaving them full liberty to do what they pleased, and then I might have have gained their good opinion; and been thought to have Preached a seasonable Sermon.*

I know not well what they would have had the Dr. do. (for 'tis something hard to divine for a multitude) yet I may modestly conjecture, that they would have had him persuade something, that was either probable, or at least possible; that the Dissenters should alter their minds in the case of Conformity, I think improbable, and they say impossible, and I wonder how the Reverend Dr. should fail to have the same thoughts concerning them.

What

What the Growing Faction is, that under pretence of Zeal against Popery, design to overthrow the Church of *England*, I know not ; and peradventure there is none such, unless it be, in some mens timorous fancies, and imaginations ; the *Presbyterians* (by which I mean such as acknowledg our Parochial Churches, and can officiate in them) desire only to be excused from subscriptions, declarations, &c. and some few alterations besides, whereof the Doctor I am sure is not ignorant, and knows may be granted, without any prejudice to this Church ; the *Independents* will be satisfied (as they profess) with their own Congregations, and why the Church of *England* may not be preserved, though they be indulged, as well as the Popish Church in *France*, notwithstanding the legal Indulgence of the Protestants, I do not understand ; but some men think, (or pretend to think, for sure they cannot really be of that opinion) that a Pin can't be pulled out, but the House must fall, that no alterations can be made in a Fabrick, without razing the Foundation : and I will add further that some few Congregations of other persuasions may be safely and prudently indulged, without any prejudice to the constitution of this Church ; and I do believe that this indulgence together with kind words, and good arguments for their *Conviction*, is more likely to put a period to the separations, and divisions that are among us, than severe Laws, and severer executions. In *History* and experience 'tis observable, that prosecution of Dissenters, doth make them more tenacious of their opinions. whereas Kindness, and Love, with prudent, and Christian endeavours for their Conviction, do soften and abate the fierceness of their Spirits, and dispose them to forsake

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them ;

them; however this I am satisfied in, that what cannot be done by this way, and these means cannot be done at all, but by remedies that are worse than the disease, and which cannot be reconciled with the Spirit of Christianity; in the mean time, Let me not be misunderstood, as if I pleaded for universal liberty, I speak this only in favour of tollerable Dissenters, for I can't endure to think, of seeing the Land of my Nativity, a Field of Blood, or such men ruined by imprisonments and Confiscations, or exiled to Forraign Countries to seek their bread in Wildernesses and Deserts. If God will admit such persons into the Kingdom of Heaven, notwithstanding their errors & mistakes. (as I do believe he will, supposing them truly, and sincerely pious,) I think we may permit them to live quietly on earth.

In the preceeding Paragraph, the *Dr.* adds, if he *had Preached for Abatements and alterations, and leaving them full Liberty to do what they pleased, he might have gained their good opinion, and been thought, to have Preached a seasonable Sermon.* Who those Dissenters are, that would have had him Preach for a full liberty for them to do what they pleased, I know not, and I something doubt whether there be any such, but if there be any such wild Fanatiques, I think they were not to be gratified, but I do also believe the *Dr.* might have said something for abatements and moderation, which would have been more to the acceptation of sober Dissenters, and some Consenters too, than what he did say in that unseasonable Sermon, (pardon the expression) for such I do believe it, notwithstanding all he hath said to vindicate it from that imputation.

But

But the *Dr.* adds pag. 53. of the Preface. *But supposing my own private opinion, were never so much for some abatements to be made, that might tend to strengthen and unite Protestants; had it been seasonable to have spoken, of the alteration of Laws, before Magistrates, and Judges, who are tyed up to the Laws in being? For any other Abatements then such as will strengthen & unite Protestants and consist with the constitution, I am no advocate: Nor I think the generality of Dissenters, but that it should be unseasonable, to discourse it before Magistrates and Judges, I cannot understand. Could not the Dr. have represented to them, the danger the Church of England is in, by the Designs and Conspiracies of the Papiits, the weakness thereof by reason of its divisions, the necessity of strengthening it by the union of Protestants, the impossibility of this Union without relaxing some Laws, the many advantages and no prejudice that would come to this Church, and Nation thereby, what difficulty had there been in all this? or what inconsistency with the duty of a private person or with good manners? the Doctor doth not want Reason, Wit, or Oratory to have rendered a discourse on this Subject, both acceptable, and convincing even to the Judges and Magistrates themselves, if he had pleased to have made use of them; and why he did not do it, I shall neither enquire, nor determine, but peradventure there may be men in the World that the Doctor had no mind to displease, that would not have liked such a discourse. However I am of opinion, that it would have been more for his Honour, and also for his Peace, to have spoken something to that purpose, than to have said what he did: And I am pretty confident that I am not mistaken.*

In the same page the Doctor adds, *I think the alteration of established Lawes, that concern the preservation of our Church and Religion, one of the weightiest things that can be taken into consideration.*

I think so too, but what will he infer from thence? Must they never be altered, or must the alteration of them never be taken into Consideration? All that reasonably can be inferred from thence is, That such things be attempted with Counsel and Deliberation, and that Reasons and Arguments for and against it, be weighed in an impartial ballance; and if in the present Circumstances of this Church, the Arguments for alteration (still preserving the Constitution) do not preponderate, there are some Conformists (and those no mean men neither) as well as Non-Conformists, are much out in their Conjectures. And I think I may reckon the excellent Doctor for one of them; for after he had laid down three Arguments for the relaxing the Lawes, in the same page, and six against it in that and the next following, he seems to be of opinion, that the three (to which more might be added) weigh more than the six; for in the Conclusion of his Preface he hath proposed several things which he thinks may be safely altered, for which I return him thanks, and I hope the Dissenters will do so too, whatever heats they may have received from his late Warm Sermon: in the mean time I do think that some few more things had need to be granted to make the Union of Protestants firm, and this Church flourishing and glorious, and so doth the Reverend Doctor, page the 93. of his Preface.

In page 60 and 61, the Doctor is very sharp against Mr. B. he accuses him of *incivility* for printing his private Letter without his knowledg, he sayes he *seems to have written his whole Book in one Continued fit of anger*, and that he hath made *spightful and injurious reflections upon him therein*.

Mr. Baxter I do confels is a plain man, and uses but little Ceremony or Courtship in his Writings, some men have humours and ways of their own, (they are his own words to Mr. Cheney, who printed an answer to the private discourse he had with him) page 136. of his Defence, which may be very easily Conceded to them, but that he wrote his Book in a continued fit of Anger, or that there are injurious and spiteful Reflections in it, I do not believe, nor cannot find: he hath a very quick and earnest temper of mind, and his stile is very keen, and pungent; but Spite and Anger are other things, and such as I believe Mr. B. a Stranger, and you an Enemy unto.

Ibid. The Doctor proceeds, *I pass over the Scurrility of his Preface, wherein after he hath in twenty Particulars described the most unskilful, proud, partial, obstinate, cruel, impertinent Adversaries, he could think of, places of Scripture, or similies; for, he then Concludes; but although all this be not the Case of the Reverend Doctor, what a malicious way of reproaching is this? to name so many very evil things, and to leave it to the Reader to apply as much as he pleases, and when he is charged with any one, to say he means not that; for he added, although all this be not the Case.*

Case of the Reverend Doctor, if this be the Justice, the Charity, the Ingenuity of Mr. B. and his Brethren, that put him upon Writing; they must give me leave to think there are some Non-Conformist Ministers, that are not the wisest, the meekest, nor the most self-denying Men upon Earth.

I hope this Learned Doctor doth not think it inconsistent with Justice or Charity, to describe an unskilful, proud, and impertinent Adversary, or that there are none such in the world; if he hath had no Experience of such Adversaries, Mr. B. I believe hath known enough, and was not without some apprehensions that he might have farther knowledge of them; and therefore in that Preface (which the Doctor calls Scurrilous) he tells his Readers, That it was not likely that he should trouble him with any Rejoinder, unless he would explain and state the Question under Dispute, much less would he contend with any Substitute, that should avoid the way of love and reason, which from the Doctor he might expect; From which words, 'tis not difficult to infer that in the following Description, Mr. B. had respect to such Substitutes, as had neither the Candour nor Learning of the Doctor, and a little ingenuity, and Charity would thus have understood him, and not have impeached him, against the plain sense and design of his words, of a malicious way of Reproaching him. But the worthy Doctor will say, that Mr. B. doth not deny, but that he had respect to him in some of those particulars. To which I reply, 'Tis true Mr. B. complains of him, that he would not state the Question, nor give him the formal reason of that sinful Separation he charges him withal; and that he takes

takes no notice of what he had said, in some former Books concerning Lawful and Unlawful Separation. But is speaking Truth a way of malicious Reproaching ? The thing is either true or false. The Doctor did state the Question, and observe, what Mr. *B.* had said, about Lawful and Unlawful Separation, or he did not ; if he did do it, the Doctor may prove it if he can ; if he did not do it, Mr. *B.* is innocent of the Accusation charged upon him.

But the Doctor will say, Mr. *B.* named very many ill things, and left the Reader to apply, as much as he pleased. To which I answer, The Reader hath no reason to apply any more than what Mr. *B.* charges upon him ; and if Readers will be unjust, and uncharitable in their Applications, the fault is their own, and Mr. *B.* is not to be accountable for it, and the Doctor may give me leave to think, that some Non-Conforming Ministers may be wise, meek, and self-denying, notwithstanding all that he hath said to the contrary, in this Paragraph.

Pref. Page the 62. The Doctor attacks Mr. *A.* and these are his words, *The fourth* [that replied to his Sermon] *comes forth with a more than ordinary briskness, and seems to set up rather for a Wit, than a grave Divine ; his Book resembled the Bird of Athens, for it seems to be made up of face and feathers ; and within a few lines he adds, Methinks such a light, vain scurrilous way of writing, doth not become such a tenderness of Conscience, as our Dissenting Brethren pretend to. And a little after he compares his manner of Writing to the Jest of Watermen and Por-*

in Counter-distinction to the *raillery* and good *humour* of *Gentlemen*; and says, That he seems *Ambitious* of the *Honour* of a second *Martyn*, whose way he *imitates*, and whose wit he equals.

To which, I might reply no more but thus, Methinks this Proud, Arrogant, Contemptuous way of writing, doth not become, either the Gravity, or Piety of the Reverend Doctor; Is it comely, or decorous to treat his Adversary with Scorn? and to compare his way of writing to the Discourses of the vilest of Men? Could the Doctor find nothing betwixt the *raillery* of *Gentlemen*, and the Buffoonry of *Porters*, to have compared with Mr. *Alfop's* manner of writing? Doth this become the Candour, the gentile Breeding, and humour of the Dean of *St. Pauls*?

But in good earnest, is there nothing in Mr. *A's* Book but Impudence, and Sloth, but bold Sayings, and impertinent Triflings? Is he the arrantest Fop that ever wasted Ink and Paper? Surely, if he were such an empty Scribler, he were beneath the Doctor's notice and observation; 'tis beneath a good humoured Gentleman, to observe or make reply to the rude and unmanly Jests and Discourses of Boatmen.

But if Mr. *A's* Book be so empty, how comes it to pass, that the most Material parts of it, have received no answer? whether it be because they are too weak, or too strong, I shall not determine; but leave that to be debated by those that are more concerned in it than I am. In Page 63. and divers others that follow

low it, the Doctor charges Mr. A. with representing him to the World as a kind of *Atheistical Hypocrite*, that is, a secret underminer of the proof of a Deity, under the pretence of establishing it. And adds, *I had nothing but a wretched malicious design of exposing him, could possibly have engaged him in it, it was so remote from his Business.* And Page the 68, and 69. (being I suppose a little conscious to himself, that he had perverted Mr. A's intention, in the quoting those words from his *Orig. Sac. and Rational Account*, which are to be seen in his Book) he says, *But it may be it will be pretended, that he did not design to prove me Atheistical; but only to shew that I acted very unreasonably, in requiring a greater certainty in them, as to the Principles of Separation, than I do allow in far greater things.* And certainly, no man that reads Mr. A's Book, can be ignorant, that it was all that he intended therein: To make this evident, I shall examine the Doctor's Accusation from its Original. In his Sermon he had quoted some passages of the Assembly of Divines, in opposition to Separation, upon pretence of tenderness of Conscience. And among others these, *We much doubt, whether such tenderness of Conscience, as ariseth out of an Opinion. cui potest subesse fallum, which may be false, when the Conscience is so tender, that it may be withal an erring Conscience, can be sufficient to justify Separation.*

To which Mr. A. replies fundry things, and among them this, *We say, i. e. Mr. A. and others of his persuasion, the Doctrine of the Sub-committee, i. e. some select Members of the Assembly, viz. That such tenderness, &c. read the rest above, as also that of Ar. B.*

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Laud; who would have all Dissenters produce Arguments quibus non potest subesse falsum, which cannot be false for their dissent, doth require more Evidence than our Learned Doctor will allow for the existence of a Deity. And to prove this, he produces the following passages from his *Rational Account*. Page 178, 179. *It is a piece of great weakness of Judgment to say there can be no certain assent where there is a meer possibility of being deceived, for there is no kind of assent in the humane understanding, as to the existence of any thing, but there is a possibility of deception in it;* and page 206, 207, he calls aloud to the Papists, to come forth with their infallible Arguments, to prove the existence of a Deity, before they talk of an infallible way of proving the truth of Religion. And then argues from them as followeth, and surely the Dissenters are not more rigidly obliged to prove the Lawfulness of their Separation, nor the sinfulness of the terms imposed on them, by Arguments that cannot possibly be false, than all Mankind is, to produce such infallible proofs for the existence of the Godhead. Let the impartial Reader now judge, whether the Reverend Doctor hath not perverted the intent and design of Mr. A. and for no other reason that I can perceive; but that he may have some shadow of pretence, to lash him with Satyrical and bitter Invectives. Whether Mr. A. hath mistaken that for a Principle of his own, which he lays down as an Inference from the Hypothesis of other men, I will not enquire, but leave to Mr. A.

Pref. Page the 71. the Doctor speaks to this purpose; *The last that appeared against my Sermon, is called the Author of the Christian Temper. I was glad to find an Adversary*

verſary pretending to that, having found ſo little of it in the *Answers of Mr. B. and Mr. A.* his buſineſs is to commit the *Reſtor of Sutton with the Dean of St. Pauls.* And immediately after he adds, *The whole deſign of that Book, doth not ſeem very agreeable to the Chriſtian temper, which the Author pretends to ; for it is to pick up all the paſſages he could meet with (in a Book written twenty years ſince) with great tenderneſs towards Diſſenters, before the Laws were eſtabliſhed.*

The Author of that Book, ſeems to me to be a Perſon of great Candour, and of a very becoming temper of Mind, and ſuch as is worthy of a Chriſtian, there is not a provoking paſſage in his whole Book to my obſervation; and, I wonder the Doctor ſhould censure it as ſo diſagreeable thereunto. But the deſign of the Book is ſtark naught; 'tis to pick up the Paſſages of a Book written Twenty years ago, with tenderneſs towards Diſſenters, whom now he oppoſeth, with ſome appearance of heat and paſſion; 'tis I confeſs, ſomewhat an odd thing to be beaten with a man's own Staff, and to be pricked and goaded with the Pins and Wires that a man's own fingers have made; this may provoke a man of a rancour and cool Complexion into ſome kind of heat, and exaſperation; but why was the Doctor's tenderneſs towards Diſſenters, determined by the eſtabliſhed Laws? was he obliged before to love them? and is he ſince obliged to abhor them? were they then fit for his pity and compaſſion, and are they now fit Objects for his Anger and Indignation? according to this Doctrin, Proteſtants may be treated with ſome tenderneſs, and love, till Laws be eſtabliſhed to the prejudice of their Conſciences, and

then unless they will conform, they may be baited with Dogs, and treated like Beasts. In the mean time, I do not believe this to be the Opinion of this Reverend Doctor; but this is the consequence of his Doctrine: and peradventure some others may charge that on his judgment, which I charge only on his Discourse.

But I would beg leave to enquire of the Doctor, whether it be inconsistent with Ingenuity, Prudence, or a Christian temper, to object to any man the inconsistency of his Writings, or the alteration of his judgment? if it be, he himself is a worse man than I ever thought him to be, who often doth it to Mr. *Baxter*; if it be not, the Author of the Book that I am now speaking of, may be a Person of Prudence, Ingenuity, and a Christian temper, notwithstanding any thing the Doctor hath said to the contrary.

Pref. Page 77. The Doctor undertakes to remove an Objection concerning the time of publishing his Book, which some think unseasonable, when there is so much talk of Union among Protestants, and there appears a more general inclination to it than formerly, and what (say they) can the laying open the weakness of Dissenters tend to, but to provoke and exasperate them, and consequently to obstruct the union so much desired?

The Doctor answers, God forbid that I should either design or do any thing which should obstruct so blessed a work, as a firm and lasting Union among Protestants; but my business is to shew the unreasonableness of those Principles and Practices that hinder it, and lay a foundation for perpetual Separation:

ration: But who are they that lay down those Principles? are they the *Presbyterians*? they have been thought men of Principles as inconsistent with Separation as any men in the World; And 'tis evident enough in the Debates between them and the Dissenting Brethren. If it be said they are gone off from their Principles; I answer, The Impositions (which to submit unto, they avow to be against their Consciences) have occasioned a Temporary and Partial Separation from this Church in many of them; but let but the Impositions be taken off (which may be easily and safely done, if our Superiors please) I make no doubt, but they will oppose Separation, by all Christian means and endeavours with as much Zeal as ever, and such as will be equal to that of the conformable Clergy themselves. And such an access to this Church, as will be made by their return unto it, will very much strengthen the Protestant Interest, and this the Papists know well enough, and therefore they will prevent it if they can. And I will add, That all those that hinder the Union of *Presbyterians* with this Church, by continuing the Impositions, are Factors for the Pope, though possibly they may do it ignorantly, at least many of them.

Touching the *Independents*, I have only this to say, I look upon many of them as very Pious and good Men, and some of them as Persons of great Knowledge and understanding. If their Principles lead to eternal and endless Separations, let them defend them themselves, I will not be their Patron. But this I will say, I esteem them true Protestants, and such as may well be useful both in Church and Common-wealth against our Com-
mon.

mon Enemies, and I think they ought to be indulged, and permitted to Worship God according to the Conduct of their own Consciences; 'tis abhorrent to me to think of Persecuting men for tolerable Errors, or to worry and afflict those on Earth, with whom I hope to live in Heaven. Civil Magistrates do tolerate, (and must do it or they must make themselves Butchers, and their Countreys great Slaughter-houses) tolerable Immoralities (and I wish they did not suffer those that are intolerable) and Governours of Churches must suffer tolerable Errors, and in some places (and in *England* among the rest) Separation for tolerable Errors, or they must do that which is a great deal worse. *Eutopian* Churches, are as arrant a fancy as *Eutopian* Common-wealths, and both equally impracticable.

Pref. pag. 78. The Doctor adds, *Upon the Principles of some of our Dissenting Brethren, let the Constitution be made never so easie to themselves, yet others may make use of their Grounds, and carry on the Differences as high as ever.*

To which I answer, there is no doubt but insufferable Hereticks, may pretend Conscience, and many other things for Indulgence, as well as modest and tolerable Dissenters; but what then? must all be equally indulged or equally refused? a man would think by this kind of arguing, that there are some besides the Non-Conformists, that are not the *wisest men in the World*. I hope our Governours will be able to distinguish betwixt those that Subvert the Christian Religion, and deny the faith, and those that erre in small things, and such as are consistent

sistent with Salvation; and that though they may urge the same Arguments for their liberty with better Men; yet they shall not have the same Concessions.

In the same page he proceeds, *If the Union so much talked of be such as tends to the lessening, and not to the encreasing of our Differences; if it be for strengthening and supporting the Protestant Interest, and not rather for the weakning and betraying it, by laying it more open to the Assaults of our Enemies; no man shall be more ready to promote it than I; no man will rejoyce more in the accomplishment of it.*

I do most heartily thank the Learned Doctor for these kind words and Promises, and I do believe them, and am in some hopes that after all the heats that have been between him and his Adversaries, that we shall be all Friends at last; for I do believe they desire no other Union, than such as will lessen our Differences (and 'twere a strange Union that should make them greater) and strengthen and support the Protestant Religion against the Assaults of its Enemies.

Pref. page the 79. The Doctor subjoyns, *But universal Liberty is quite another thing from Union, as much as loosing is from binding up.*

'Tis very true, but where are the Dissenters that ever pleaded for it? Hath Mr. B. spoken one word on the behalf of it? nay, hath he not said very much against it? hath Dr. O. Mr. A. or any other of the Doctor's Antagonists spoken any thing in favour of it. I find them arguing

guing for nothing but Liberty for their own Congregations ; and if they may have that, I believe they will be very well content, and surely Liberty for some few Independent Congregations, and Liberty for all the wild Fanaticks and Enthusiasts in the world, are not the same thing.

But suppose, says the Doctor in the same page, the Indulgence be at present strictly limited to Dissenting Protestants ; Are we sure it shall so continue ? I answer no, but what then ? shall it never be granted them, because we are not sure it shall always be continued to them ? This is loose kind of Arguing. The Doctor was not, nor is not sure that he shall continue Dean of St. Paul's to his lives end, but that did not hinder him from accepting it, or the King from bestowing it on him, and much good may it do him with all my heart, and why should Indulgence, with restriction, and limitation to Protestants be refused, because 'tis not certain it shall continue ? is that sufficient reason for the refusal of it ? if it be thought so, I perceive very light Reasons will weigh very heavy, where some men hold the Balance. But the Doctor says, *The Popish Religion will get footing on the Dissenters grounds : for the same Reasons (viz.) Scruple of Conscience, Suffering for Religion, &c. will extend farther when occasion serves.*

I answer, I doubt not but Papists may, and will make use of the same Arguments, with Dissenting Protestants ; but I hope our Superiors will see reason to return differing answers to them. There is some difference betwixt Protestants that will support the Government, and defend

send the Protestant Religion with their Lives and Fortunes, and Papists that will ruine, and subvert both the one and the other by all the endeavours they can ; and I do believe there may be good cause to make differing Replies to their Reasons for Indulgence and Toleration, *even when mens heats are over*, and their Spirits in the greatest Calm.

But the Doctor may possibly say, though some of the Dissenters be against Universal Toleration ; yet others of them are for it, and of that number is the Author of the *Peaceable Design*.

To which I answer, I am not able to account for every single Dissenter ; but I believe I have given the Sence of the most of them, and that Author hath made his own Apology in a small but very judicious Tractate lately Printed, Entituled, *An Answer to Dr. Stillingfleet, so far as it concerns that Design, with Animadversions upon the Debate between Mr. Baxter and him, concerning the National Church, and Head of it* ; For which, I do pay him my very hearty Thanks ; for, besides the Apology he hath made for himself, he hath done the Learned Doctor and Mr. *Baxter* a great deal of right ; for he hath modestly and plainly rebuked the Pride and Haughtiness of the one, and given the other his due and deserved praise. Mr. *B.* is a Person of Eminent Piety, Learning, and Judgment ; his understanding is very large and extensive, and in my apprehension reaches farther, and comprehends more than the most of Mortal men, I have a very great esteem and honour for him, and do acknowledge myself to have Learn't more from him than from any man

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in the world, and generally his Notions lye more easie in my mind, and are more agreeable to my spirit, than any Man's whatsoever, and certainly is no contemptible Adversary (though the Doctor hath thought fit to despise him) and I believe he will find it so, before his Controversie be ended. For although the Doctor's Book be written with Learning and Judgment, yet 'tis liable to many Exceptions; the most regular Fortifications have for the most part some weak places in them, and this Learned Book hath its Infirmities, and Mr. *B.* is an experienced Controvertist, and a very Sagacious Man, and will not fail to discover them. The Ingenious, Learned, and considering Author of the above-mentioned Discourse hath discovered, exposed and baffled that uncouth Notion of a National Church without an Head; and I doubt not but Mr. *B.* will discover and expose many more. For that's not the only Paradox that the Doctor hath maintained.

The same Author hath propounded something for Union in this Church, which I think worthy of the Consideration of all that wish well to the Peace thereof. 'Tis to this sence he proposes that the tolerated Churches (if the Government shall think fit to permit them by Laws) be declared parts of the National Church, whereof the King to be the Head; he proposes also, that their Method of Government, form of Worship and Doctrine be stated, and the Bishops, as His Majestie's Officers by Commission, do supervise and visit them, and see that they observe and keep to their own chosen Methods and Institutions, and that particular Persons be not injured by any Arbitrary Proceedings of their Pastors, nor their Doctrine, corrupted by any secret or Clandestine insinuation of Hereticks.

I think these things are proposed with Judgment and Consideration, and I see no reason why they may not be granted by our Superiors, and accepted by the Dissenters themselves; what inconveniencies or absurdities may follow upon their being declared Parts of the National Church, I do not yet discern, (and there's nothing else that will stick with moderate) and peaceable men) Peradventure others may see (or at least imagine it) some ill consequences in such a Concession; I do therefore only propose it to Consideration. Every thing that speaks for Union and Peace, is worthy of good and peaceable mens Meditations.

This little Tract I perceive undergoes various censures in the world: Some say that the Author was Angry, and hath expressed some heat and passion therein. To which I answer, 'tis possible that the Doctors treating Mr. B. with so much indignity and contempt might possibly warm him a little. But I observe no unbecoming Passion in him or his Book, he seems to be a Person of a Calm and Serene Spirit, and hardly capable of passionate Emotions. The great slight put upon his Friend, might add something to the more vigorous Agency of his spirits, but it did not boyl them high enough for intemperate Anger.

Others say that he hath dealt proudly and neglectfully himself, and hath not treated the Doctor with that respect that is suitable to so great a Man. To which I reply, The Author of that Book is no Courtly Writer, he doth not powder nor dress his Discourses; he writes neither with Oyl nor Gall, but with plain vulgar Ink;

what he thinks he speaks openly and honestly, without any respect of persons. And truly a Supercilious, Haughty, Ironical contempt of worthy and good Men, is so ill favoured a thing, that nothing but plain and unpolished words are fit to rebuke it; and such a plain Rebuke is much more Christian and worthy of Religion, than an insolent despising, and trampling upon ones Adversaries, which the Doctor doth too too frequently in his Book.

Sir, Having gratified your request in giving you my suddain Thoughts of the Controversie between Dr. *Stillingfleet* and Mr. *Baxter*, as to the point of Temper on each side; I now make this request, That after you have read my Letter, you would commit it to the Fire, whereby you will oblige

Your very Friend.

F I N I S.
